



4-H and International Positive Youth Development Programs

It is USDA/NIFA's policy to promote positive youth development in the United States, and to draw upon that deep experience to assist with similar positive youth development activities around the world. For more than a century, USDA/NIFA has used legislative authority to authorize the 4-H program within the United States in close collaboration with the Cooperative Extension Systems of the Land-grant Universities. While the 4-H program- its name, emblem, and brand - is authorized for enriching the lives of America's youth, much of the experience gained over the years by Cooperative Extension youth development leaders is relevant to those around the world who want to organize programs for promoting positive development of their young citizens.

Positive youth development is not about a specific program in any particular country; it's about the power of young people. A positive youth development program teaches young people how to gain a better understanding of who they are and what they want from life. It teaches them to make better choices and create positive change in their communities. Land-grant institutions may elect to mentor another country in the development of positive youth development programming, using their own 4-H program as a model. Institutions do not, however, have the authority to authorize the use of the 4-H Name and Emblem outside of their own state geographic boundaries.

International exchange programs are conducted under the auspices of a State 4-H Program, and it must clearly indicate which state and institution accepts responsibility for the exchange program. Exchange programs address 4-H priorities, goals, and essential elements. Exchange programs are supported by program management guidelines, legal guidelines, risk management guidelines, volunteer management guidelines, and positive youth development guidelines. Exchanges are part of a sequence of learning experiences, not as stand alone activities. Exchange programs create opportunities for 4-H'ers to gain global experience in leadership, service, and project work.

USDA/NIFA reaffirms its interest in collaborating with other countries in promoting positive youth development. USDA/NIFA cannot authorize nor endorse the use of the 4-H Name and Emblem internationally. As resources permit, USDA/NIFA stands ready to provide relevant American experience and expertise for positive youth development programs.



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